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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - HAITI

1. The State Department warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Haiti and urges that they exercise a high degree of caution when traveling there. While the overall security situation has improved, political stability in Haiti remains fragile, and the potential for politically-motivated violence persists. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning dated January 28, 2009, and is being issued to provide updated information on country conditions, and to alert Americans to ongoing security concerns and on contacting and registering with the U.S. Embassy in Haiti.

2. Haiti, like most Caribbean countries, can be affected by hurricanes and other storms. Hurricane season runs from approximately June 1 - November 30 each year. The lack of government infrastructure and rescue services, combined with impassable roads and bridges, have severely hindered rescue and relief efforts. During the 2008 hurricane season, four tropical storms struck Haiti, causing torrential rains, extensive flooding and mudslides, and hundreds of reported casualties. Most transport infrastructure damaged by the 2008 storms has been repaired, although in many cases repairs are temporary pending the construction of more permanent structures. Haiti has few secondary roads that are in good condition. Drivers traveling on Haiti's roads must be aware that there will be frequent deviations, stoppages and obstructions due to ongoing road construction and repairs. For additional details concerning traffic safety and road conditions, please see the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Haiti.

3. There were violent confrontations between opposing candidates' supporters and armed attacks on polling

stations in a handful of Haitian towns during the April 19, 2009, Senate elections. There was less violence in the second round of voting on June 21. International monitors described the elections as generally well-organized and orderly. The absence of an effective police force in many areas of Haiti means that, when protests take place, there is potential for looting, the erection of intermittent roadblocks by armed protestors or by the police, and the possibility of random crime, including kidnapping, carjacking, home invasion, armed robbery and assault. Although the Haitian National Police are more visible and are gradually contributing to improving public security, especially in the metropolitan area of the capital, Americans in Haiti should practice good personal security, take commonsense precautions and avoid any event where crowds may congregate. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful occasionally turn violent. Americans should closely monitor news media and the U.S. Embassy's website at: http://haiti.usembassy.gov/warden_information.html .

¶4. U.S. citizens traveling to and residing in Haiti despite this warning are reminded that there also is a chronic danger of violent crime, especially kidnappings. Most kidnappings are criminal in nature, and the kidnappers make no distinctions of nationality, race, gender, or age. The incidence of kidnapping in Haiti has diminished from its peak in 2006 when 60 Americans were reported kidnapped. As of July 2009, one American had been reported kidnapped this year. In 2008, 27 Americans were reported kidnapped. Most of the Americans were abducted in Haiti's two largest cities, Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien. Some kidnap victims have been killed, shot, sexually assaulted, or physically abused.

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While the capacity and capabilities of the Haitian National Police have improved since 2006, the presence of UN stabilization force (MINUSTAH) peacekeeping troops and UN-formed police units remain critical to maintaining an adequate level of security throughout the country. The lack of civil protections in Haiti, as well as the limited capability of local law enforcement to resolve crime, further compounds the security threat to American citizens.

¶5. While MINUSTAH remains fully deployed and is assisting the government of Haiti in providing security, travel is always hazardous within Port-au-Prince. U.S. Embassy personnel are under an Embassy-imposed curfew and must remain in their homes or in U.S. government facilities during the curfew. Some areas are off-limits to Embassy staff after dark, including downtown Port-au-Prince. The Embassy restricts travel by its staff to some areas outside of Port-au-Prince because of the prevailing road, weather, or security conditions. This may constrain our ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens outside Port-au-Prince. Demonstrations and violence may occasionally limit Embassy operations to emergency services, even within Port-au-Prince.

¶6. The Department of State strongly advises U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Haiti to register either online at <https://travelregistration.state.gov> or with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince. The Consular Section can be reached at (509) (2)229-8000 or e-mail address acspap@state.gov. Travelers should also consult the Department of State's latest Country Specific Information for Haiti and the Worldwide Caution at <http://travel.state.gov>. American citizens also may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States.

¶7. Minimize considered.

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